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The Killing Fields of East Timor

Comment and Analysis

in the British Press

occasional reports no. 17

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The Indonesia Human Rights Campaign

111 Northwood Road, Thornton Heath, Surrey CR7 8HW, UK

The killing fields of East Timor

On 12 November 1991, Indonesian troops opened fired on several thousand East Timorese at the Santa Cruz cemetery, Dili, East Timor, killing at least 180 people and wounding many more. The demonstrators had gone to the cemetery to pay tribute to **Sebastiao Rangel Gomes**, a young Timorese shot dead by troops at Motael Church two weeks earlier. It was a peaceful demonstration; some were carrying banners in support of self-determination.

Several foreigners, including journalists, saw the troops open fire and were themselves beaten and injured. One young New Zealander of Malaysian extraction was shot dead. The others have given eye-witness testimony, published photos and video footage, which has been published and broadcast throughout the world. Footage of the massacre shot by a Yorkshire Television cameraman has been shown in many countries.

The Santa Cruz Massacre is the latest in a saga of atrocities suffered by the people of East Timor since Indonesian troops invaded East Timor on 7 December 1975. Some 200,000, a third of the population, have been killed since then, For the first time, however, there has been worldwide outrage. Some governments have announced cutbacks in aid to Indonesia, while the Australian government is under growing pressure to withdraw *de jure* recognition of Indonesia's illegal annexation of East Timor.

The British Government has not denounced the atrocity, hiding behind a statement by the European Community. The reason for Whitehall's reluctance to speak out is clear: Britain is a major supplier of military equipment to the Indonesian armed forces: naval frigates, ground-attack aircraft, armoured personnel carriers, Rapier missiles and a quantity of high-tech military hardware. Military personnel are trained in the United Kingdom.

This collection of articles and editorials from the British press is proof of unprecedented interest in Britain about the murderous Suharto regime. MPs from all parties have signed motions condemning the massacre. But more pressure will be needed to force the British Government to review its policy of supporting the Suharto regime.

29 November 1991

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Massacre among the graves

Minutes after this picture of a peaceful demonstration was taken last week, Indonesian soldiers fired on the crowd. It was the latest of many such outrages in East Timor, a conquered territory whose plight the world has long ignored. But this was different. A British journalist, **Max Stahl**, was there in the midst of the bloodshed. This is his story

IT WAS a cold-blooded and premeditated massacre. The Indonesians, at least 200 uniformed soldiers and police, perhaps a whole battalion, drove up in trucks, took up position and on the order opened fire with automatic weapons straight into the crowd.

The two to three thousand pro-independence demonstrators were nervous but excited as they marched last Tuesday through the centre of Dili, the capital of the former Portuguese colony of East Timor. They went along the seafront lined with Indonesian warships, past the governor's palace and up almost a mile to the public cemetery known as Santa Cruz, waving the flags and banners of the occupied colony's independence parties and its continuing armed resistance.

They were almost all students and young people. There were women and even some children protesting against the invasion of their country 16 years ago and its subsequent bloody and illegal "integration" into Indonesia at a cost of 200,000 Timorese lives.

But such protest has never gone unchallenged by the 60,000 or more soldiers, policemen and paid informers who keep the 650,000 Timorese in a state of fear. I was in the cemetery when the shooting started outside its walls, where some 2,000 people were on the street, waiting to file through the gate into the graveyard.

The leaders of the demonstration had walked into the cemetery and made an announcement over louspeakers that prayers were to begin for their dead companion, Sebastian, killed on 28 October by policemen in civilian clothes, who were stoning a church where persecuted students took refuge at night. Sebastian was buried at Santa Cruz, and the march was nominally in his memory.

I was knocked to the ground and trampled in the stampede for the safety of the cemetery chapel. I scrambled for cover among the tombstones and dust and screams filled the air. The scene at the cemetery gate was frozen into my mind.

A young man, badly wounded but still not dead, lay across the entrance. Others had tripped and fallen in the dirt. A solid wedge of people were stuck in the entrance, pressed from behind by hundreds of others desperate to escape the bullets. Then the wedge broke, and the people poured screaming through the gap, trampling over the bodies, the wounded and the whole alike.

Outside in the street, the soldiers kept up a sustained volley of fire, perhaps two minutes long – thousands of rounds poured into the crowd and down into the cemetery where I was hiding.

Then there was a pause, with sporadic fire, and then another volley shorter than the first, and then more sporadic shots as the soldiers moved, in ordered ranks, to surround the cemetery and trap those inside.

Those who had fallen were left to bleed where they lay. This is where the young New Zealander, Kamal Bamadhaj, lost his chance of survival. Wounded by three gunshots, he was still barely conscious when the international Red Cross picked him up. But the ambulance was held up by soldiers several times before it reached the hospital and he had already lost a tremendous amount of blood before they were allowed to get to him.

Then once inside the military hospital, like at least 89 seriously wounded and perhaps as many as 50 dead, no one was allowed access to him. All information was refused to the Red Cross, to his family, his friends, even, it appears, to his embassy, as he died.

This was not a bureaucratic accident. Relatives of other wounded Timorese who came to enquire about missing relatives were arrested and interrogated. I spoke to some who had fled and dare not go back. Inside the cemetery I saw soldiers clearly commanded by officers in civilian dress, moving methodically between the tombstones, searching out wounded and fugitive demonstrators. As they got to them they kicked them and beat them, severely wounded and unhurt alike, with rifle butts and batons.

I was filming all this, ignoring the shouts and the pointed fingers of the soldiers, who had now mainly stopped firing but were not yet, in this methodical scheme, allowed to get to me in the centre of the cemetery.

Several young men gathered around me, thinking that I, a foreigner, might offer some protection. One had blood pouring out of his stomach, another used a shirt to bandage a lower leg in tatters, a third was simply paralysed with fear. He repeated over and over again: "We're all going to die, we're all dead, I'm going to die, please help me mister. You can help me mister, you must not leave us, you must take us with you mister or we're all dead."

But I could not help them. All I could do was bury my videotape in a grave in anticipation of my own arrest and promise them that this time the cynical carnage of the Indonesian military would not be lost in a welter of international evasion and Indonesian lies, as has happened so often in the last 16 years of East Timor's history, during which nearly one in three of its people – roughly 200,000 out of a population of 650,000 – have died.

In this the presence of seven more foreign witnesses may help. Three of these, two Americans and an English photographer, were themselves severely beaten and, by their own reports, only narrowly saved from death at the hands of the soldiers. The English photographer was threatened with bayonets and saved by the intervention of a captain from being shot by a soldier who thought "he spoke Portuguese", a language still spoken by many Timorese but not by the Indonesians, and therefore a cause of great suspicion.

And yet already the half-truths and outright lies issued to Indonesia's friends and trading partners abroad have begun to cloud the truth about this killing and about the continuing abuse of those still held. The emphasis of diplomats from the Australian and British embassies who approached me was clear. Upper-

most in their minds was the case of the alleged stabbing of an Indonesian army major, Girhan Lantara. (As the days go by, another army victim has mysteriously been added in some reports).

I first heard of this stabbing the day after the massacre as a reason for "loyal troops" running amok out of revenge, and then as evidence of the "riot" that official Indonesian forces say they were forced to control. In the words of the official statements: "Stones were thrown at police stations" and "persuasive methods had been tried and failed", then following this, "normal procedures were used to control the riot". Neither I nor any foreign witness or local I know saw any of these events or any reaction to them from policemen or demonstrators during the march (the major almost certainly suffered his wound after the shooting began).

I was held at the police station where the arrested students and demonstrators were taken. I saw 12 trucks with young men stripped to the waist and bound, seated 30 or more to a truck with the police on the rails jabbing at them with rifle butts. During my nine hours of comfortable captivity I spoke to the police chief, to officers involved in the "operation" and to my interrogators.

Why, I asked, had they carried out this barbarous killing. Why did they need guns at all when the demonstrators had none? No one at the station offered the unfortunate major as a motive. No one even bothered to suggest there had been a riot. Nor did they add the more recent assertions emerging from General Sintong Panjaitan, commander of the Udayana military command that covers East Timor. These include the firing of a shot by demonstrators (I heard no stray shots before the attack), the throwing of a hand-grenade "that luckily didn't go off", and the confiscation of three hand-grenades, six pistols, three rifles, three swords and a number of knives and blades".

The truth, as all foreign witnesses have confirmed, is that there was no riot. There was a procession, a demonstration of exceptionally good order, even good humour, despite the fear and apprehension of the participants. All the "provocation" the military needed was in the pro-resistance and pro-independence banners and slogans of the demonstrators, and in their temerity in demonstrating at all. This is not surprising. Every recent pro-indepedence demonstration has been attacked. Every time the excuse has been the same. And every time what independent evidence there is and the testimony of foreigners tells a different story.

Already the half-truths and outright lies issued to Indonesia's friends and trading partners abroad have begun to cloud the truth about this killing

One such attack, in 1989, took place in full view of the Pope, who was celebrating mass on his visit to East Timor; another in 1990 occurred in front of the US ambassador's hotel. In the latter case even those Timorese officially invited to speak to him were later arrested and beaten.

And the run-up to the day of this demonstration had been a sustained campaign of intimidation and arrests by the army, "Intel" (the Indonesian Intelligence Service), the police and their numerous hired informers known as "buffos" or "clowns" to the local Timorese.

This campaign was related to the planned visit of Portuguese parliamentarians in November "to gain information at first hand" on the situation in the colony which, according to international law and UN resolutions, they are still legally responsible for administering.

High hopes were placed on this visit by the Timorese, many of whom believed the Portuguese were coming back to ensure a referendum on independence be held and to finish the decolonisation process they started 17 years ago.

Preparations were made in secret to receive the delegation. Over many months, banners were prepared, slogans agreed, demonstrations planned and position papers worked out, in secret meetings among the students and the resistance. During almost two years in the mountains the thousand to 1,500 guerrillas "softened" their war and refrained from offensive moves, under orders from their commander, Xanana Gusmao, "to stabilise the situation".

On the Indonesian side, the army doubled its normal garrison and launched a series of sweeps and offensives with upwards of 30,000 men (on the estimates of resistance commanders). The police and the intelligence service hired more informers and embarked on a campaign of quick arrests, followed by interrogations and beatings in an attempt to frustrate the political resistance and turn the victims into informers, dangling a promise of money for information, and a safer future.

They added to that a widespread campaign of threats. On 28 October, the very day plainclothes police stoned the Motael church and killed the student Sebastian, the *bupati* (senior local administrator) of Dili called three schools together to inform them that anyone who spoke to the Portuguese or approached them "would end up in Tacitolo". Tacitolo is one of the best-known killing grounds used in the early Eighties by Indonesian soldiers and death squads disposing of their Timorese victims.

To underline this threat, a mysterious hole, similar to that used in the past for burying bodies, was dug at Tacitolo and at other former killing grounds.

Schoolteachers and government workers were told they would lose their jobs and villages were told that everyone between 10 and 45 would be wiped out. Intelligence agents let it be known that lists were being prepared for torture or extermination.

Sometimes it seemed that almost every young Timorese was likely to be *perseguido* (pursued), or was already on the run. They moved houses, towns, night by night, slept rough, left jobs and stayed out of schools in order to stay ahead of their pursuers and prepare for the Portuguese.

And then, because of Indonesian objections to an Australian journalist due to accompany the delegation, the Portuguese cancelled their trip. The students were left exposed, just as they had put their heads above the parapet, and the Indonesians moved in with intensified house-to-house searches, and yet more threats to those arrested.

It was in this climate that the independence demonstration was planned by the political clandestine front and authorised by the resistance commander-in-chief, Xanana Gusmao, to coincide with a visit of the UN special rapporteur on torture, Peter Kuijmans, to Dili.

It was a crumb thrown to the students by the outside world that they felt had, once again, let them down. Discipline for the demonstration was to be tight to ensure no hostages were left to fortune or to the Indonesian military. And although in the event the Indonesians needed no hostages, and up to 50 died in the shootings with more than a hundred wounded and up to 400 arrested, beaten, made to walk barefoot across thorns, and tortured with electric shocks; although four more were stabbed to death in the police station, according to some of those released, and although perhaps 150 are still suffering this abuse, on the morning after the massacre there were smiles on the faces of many Timorese.

This was because the foreigners had been there and filmed the event, and the foreigners, for once, were also beaten up and this, they believe, will be noticed. This, they believe, may lift a little the curse which is worse than oppression and death for Timorese, the curse of their total and relentless isolation in their struggle.

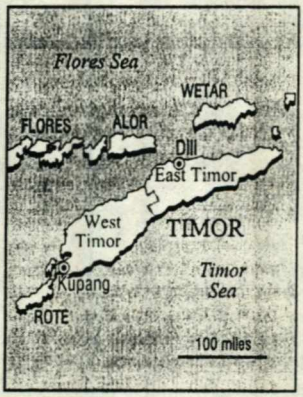
The writer is using a nom de plume to protect those who helped him

The conquest the world decided to ignore

INDONESIA invaded and occupied East Timor in December 1975, a rare instance of conquest in the post-war world. The event passed relatively unnoticed because it was only months after the communist victories in Vietnam and Cambodia and the West had other things on its mind. The United States and its allies gently chastised Jakarta and then got on with containing the Soviet threat to the region.

At the time of the invasion, the territory was in the throes of a civil war. It was a Portuguese colony, and the dictatorship in Lisbon had been overthrown the previous year, at once removing the colonial will to remain and stimulating the demand for self-rule and for power. The left-wing nationalist movement, Fretilin, had pushed its opponents across the border into the Indonesian-held western side of Timor island and declared the territory independent.

Indonesia announced that it did not want a Cuba on its doorstep. The troops moved in, East Timor was sealed off from the outside world and a scorched-earth offensive started against Fretilin and the secessionist threat. Around 200,000 people died over the next seven years.



East Timor has been a colony of Portugual since 1702, and of all Lisbon's overseas possessions it had long been the most neglected. It lies about 400 miles north-east of Darwin and its people are ethnically different from the light-skinned Javanese who dominate the archipelago. Colonialism had added a cultural difference: Indonesia, long as a Dutch colony, was little affected by proselytising Christianity; East Timor was Roman Catholic. The colony's distance from Lisbon also encouraged a spirit of self-sufficiency that made its people less willing to accept outside authority. Indonesia was clearly a foreign power.

17 NOVEMBER 1991

THE INDEPENDENT
ON SUNDAY
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In the wrong country

IN JANUARY Britain and America went to war because, five months earlier, an oil-rich country had invaded a small neighbour and declared it a province. Last week the soldiers of another oil-rich country, occupying the territory of a small neighbour, shot dead scores of unarmed civilians who were demanding the right to self-determination.

This was not the first massacre in East Timor; nor, probably, will it be the last. This small Pacific nation, 400 miles north of Australia, was invaded by Indonesia 16 years ago. News of last week's massacre spread fast because, unusually, foreigners were present. There was some outrage from the allies that went to Kuwait's defence, but not much. East Timor is a country that everyone wants to forget; a few British voices mentioned it in January but only to help make their case against the Gulf war.

Genocide is not too strong a word for what has happened in this former Portuguese colony. It is widely accepted that since Indonesia's "intervention" some 200,000 people out of a population of 600,000 have died – from military action, summary execution, disease and famine. A generation has been all but wiped out. Remarkably, the determination of the next generation seems undiminished. The occupiers tried to turn the young people of East Timor into good Indonesians, investing heavily in education, outlawing the local language and taking the brightest to Java to be trained as administrators. But the young have used their newly acquired skills against the occupiers, waging a kind of *intifada*.

The United Nations is opposed to Indonesia's annexation of East Timor. But its resolutions have not been translated into action. They probably never will be. Indonesia, unlike Iraq, does not threaten the balance of power in a strategically important region. It does not threaten oil supplies. There is no direct danger to the security of an American ally. Yet the moral principles are almost identical to those called in support of the Gulf war. East Timor's misfortune is to be in the wrong place at the wrong time.

Mourners walked into bloody ambush

Missionary reveals plot of East Timor's Sharpeville

Hugh O'Shaughnessy

DRAMATIC new evidence provided to *The Observer* about last week's killing and wounding of hundreds of people in Dili, the main town of Indonesian-occupied East Timor, testifies that the massacre was a meticulously planned military operation aimed at killing the principal protesters against the occupation.

Contrary to versions put about by the regime of General Suharto, it was not an incident which could be blamed on trigger-happy Indonesian soldiers responding to provocation from civilians.

The tragedy, which is being called the Indonesian Sharpeville, has concentrated world attention on the former Portuguese colony that has been under occupation since Suharto's forces invaded in 1975. Under the occupation, according to Amnesty International, about 200,000 people have died in a country whose population is today put at about 600,000.

Renato Stefani, an Italian missionary from Turin, who was in Dili last week, yesterday gave a detailed account of the killing. A procession of mourners formed early on Tuesday at Motael church in the western section of the capital, to walk to the Santa Cruz cemetery in commemoration of Sebastião Gomes, a young Timorese killed by Indonesian forces last month.

'It was a well-planned trap,' said Stefani from his home in Tokyo yesterday. 'The mourners were accompanied by police until they reached the Nova Resende Hotel in the centre of the town, when the police suddenly withdrew. Troops rapidly appeared from all sides and went with the mourners to the cemetery. When several hundred mourners were inside and several hundred more were pressing to get in, the army opened fire for two or three minutes, reloading their weapons when they were empty. Perhaps a thousand rounds were fired.

'In the cemetery, an Indonesian took out a knife and plunged it into the belly of a young Timorese mourner and ripped it about till he died. It was a sea of blood. Hours after the massacre I saw bloodstains on the road — even though the soldiers had tried to scrub them out.'

Though the Indonesian account of the killing has varied, one principal thread has been that the troops had responded to provocation. Stefani said the wounded were removed from the civil hospital in Dili to the military one. 'The relatives were begging the military for the bodies before they started rotting in the heat, but the army took no notice. Corpses were being put in mass graves.'

Stefani, who had visited other parts of East Timor before the massacre, also reported fresh graves in the military cemetery at the town of Baucau, which pointed to the fact that the occupation forces were continuing to suffer casualties at the hand of the Timorese guerrilla resistance, the Falintil, commanded by its veteran leader, Xanana Gusmão.

'There will be worse days to come,' suggested Stefani as he told of Falintil's pledges to step up the war on the occupiers. In the opinion of Stefani, who left Dili last Thursday, the massacre has only strengthened Timorese resistance to the military dictatorship in Indonesia, which purported to annexe East Timor in 1976. 'Before the massacre about 80 per cent of Timorese were opposed to union with Indonesia. Today it must be 95 per cent,' he said.

The international outcry that has followed the massacre has, according to diplomatic observers, put paid to the efforts of the Indonesian regime to get tacit international acceptance of its annexation of East Timor. The annexation has been formally acknowledged only by Australia, whose government is keen to exploit the reportedly vast Timorese oil reserves. Even Bob Hawke, the Australian Prime Minister, called the killing 'deplorable' and demanded punishment for those responsible.

New Zealand has sent a diplomat to investigate the death at the cemetery of one of its citizens, Kamal Bamadhaj, an aid worker of Malaysian parentage. In Washington, 222 members of the House of Representatives sent a letter of concern to Secretary of State James Baker: two US reporters were badly beaten by Indonesian troops in the mêlée.

In Britain, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office has played down its reaction. A spokesman admitted that Britain had joined its European Community partners in condemnation, but said that when the Indonesian ambassador was called in last week Britain had expressed a concern which did not amount to a protest.

The **Guardian** COMMENT

Concern is not enough

THE GREAT TIDE of change which has swept away the cold war in Europe and begun to transform the Middle East extends to further reaches of the world. It also reanimates portions of our global conscience which previously were too often dormant. There have been massacres in Indonesia before, but the killings in East Timor have touched a newly sensitive spot. It is the same moral area which is roused by the suppression of peaceful demonstrations in Nairobi or the instigation of riots in Kinshasa. Former client states in the former cold war must be looked at more critically. We hear so often that democracy and human rights are indivisible that we actually begin to believe it. The new tide also has its effect within the states concerned, where local democratic forces gain courage to raise their voices. Yesterday saw an unprecedented street protest in Jakarta against the Dili killings, while Indonesian human rights organisations risk punishment by heading for the island to conduct their own investigation.

Other factors too have added to the horror of the massacre. Because of the bravery of one Yorkshire TV cameraman, it has had a visual impact not so different from that of Tiananmen Square. Those who saw the footage will not easily forget the sight of panic-stricken mourners fleeing through the gates of the cemetery, and of brutal soldiers casually beating the wounded. In Portugal, the ex-colonial power, the sight of Timorese women uttering desperate prayers — in Portuguese — had a very special impact. Yesterday was declared a day of mourning and teachers in Portuguese schools gave special instruction on East Timor to pupils. In these circumstances, the claim by opponents of the Jakarta regime that a second massacre occurred last Friday, with the execution of 70 to 80 witnesses of the previous shooting, must also be taken seriously.

Two official teams of investigation have been established — one by the army and the other by the government of President Suharto. Neither is likely to seek diligently for the truth, but they reflect the duality of Indonesian politics today in which the armed forces have moved away from Suharto. Though unwilling to be seen as the potential instigator of a coup, the army is unhappy at the prospect of Suharto's re-election as president in 1993. He still holds several high cards, and has forged close relations both with the Chinese entrepreneurs and with the Muslim movement. Indonesia's recent economic boom has also been helpful to his government, masking the effects of high-level corruption. But Suharto's bid for international esteem will be an early casualty of East Timor. This week he begins a tour to capitalise on his chairmanship of the Non-Aligned Movement. Now he must fear that next year's Jakarta summit will turn instead into an international inquiry into his own regime. Meanwhile, Indonesia's Western friends — including Britain which has only voiced a muted "concern" — should ask much tougher questions.

NEWSTATESMAN
SOCIETY

22 November 1991

EDITORIAL

East Timor's forgotten tyranny

At 8am on Tuesday 12 November, 200 Indonesian troops opened fire on several thousand people making their way into the Santa Cruz cemetery in Dili, the capital of Indonesian-occupied East Timor. They killed at least 100 people and wounded more than 100 others. Hundreds more were arrested and are now in custody. Three days after the massacre it was reported that 80 prisoners were executed in the district of Bemos, after first being forced to strip naked and having their hands and feet bound. This week, Indonesian police attacked and arrested students and Timorese who protested against the the massacre in a demonstration in Jakarta.

The crowd in Dili, mostly young people, and including a large number of schoolchildren—none of the dead so far identified was older than 24—had joined the procession to lay flowers on the grave of Sebastao Gomes, shot dead two weeks previously while claiming sanctuary in a church.

Dili had been tense since the cancellation of a Portuguese parliamentary delegation that was due to start a visit to the island on 4 November. Troops had been moved in to repress any signs of dissent by East Timorese, many of whom consider themselves Portuguese and who want the old colonial power to return.

Portugal pulled out of its former colony in 1975 after over 270 years, only to be immediately replaced by invading Indonesian troops from the Suharto regime. Since then, the Indonesians have carried out a racist and genocidal campaign against the people of East Timor. Over 200,000 people are thought to have died in the last 16 years. Over 60,000 soldiers and armed police now guard the 650,000 people who remain.

According to eye witness accounts now being received in the west, the troops in Dili fired without provocation. Stories emanating from the Indonesian authories which refer to armed demonstrators are strongly denied by these witnesses. The massacre actually took place while Professor Peter Kooijmans, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Torture, was in Dili. His hotel was surrounded by troops and he was unable to see what was happening.

Indonesia's murderous response to what was effectively a pro- independence demonstration was typical of its attitude during the past 16 years. A civilian from the village of Nahareka in the Venilale region reported that, on 18 September this year, the senior officer of Indonesian battalion 406 had called a meeting of all villagers and warned them that if they were seen to make contact with visiting foreign delegations, everyone between the ages of 10 and 45 would be executed. In 1989, crowds were attacked by the army and police in front of the Pope, who was visiting the country. A year later, they attacked crowds in front of the US ambassador's hotel. Armed sweeps through the dense jungle of the interior have regularly led to civilian casualties.

East Timor has been the subject of ten UN resolutions, and yet most nations prefer to ignore what is happening there. The muted official reaction of near-neighbour Australia to this recent massacre may have been influenced by its 1989 agreement with Indonesia jointly to explore the oil-rich Timor Sea. Australia is the only industrial power to give *de jure* recognition to Indonesia's unlawful annexation.

The British government too, as in so many other cases, has put trade above human rights. Since 1978, it has been a major supplier of arms and military hardware to Indonesia; in June this year British Aerospace signed a big deal with Indonesia to collaborate over the production of Hawk aircraft.

Yet in carrying out the Dili massacre the Indonesians made one serious error they normally try to avoid. They allowed westerners to witness what they were doing—although one New Zealander died and several other journalists were beaten and came close to being murdered (see Alexander Cockburn, page 14).

As a result there has been an enormous worldwide outcry following the deaths, with the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in Washington calling for a suspension of all US military aid to Indonesia and the European Community calling for those responsible to be brought to trial. In London, the Foreign Office called in the Indonesian ambassador to ask him what had happened. No doubt he gave them a good story. Arms sales are unlikely to be affected.

THE TIMES FRIDAY NOVEMBER 22 1991

ISLAND OF OPPRESSION

Two massacres of East Timorese civilians by the Indonesian army in the past ten days have forced that neglected and brutalised people back into the consciousness of the world. The Indonesian annexation is said by the resistance to have cost the lives of some 200,000 civilians over the past 16 years. The United Nations is being urged by Portugal to challenge this vicious occupation. But the great democratic powers – America, Europe and Japan – have so far shown no serious determination to bring the Indonesian government's crimes against humanity in East Timor to an end.

After the Portuguese revolution of 1975, the governor fled the island. The nationalist movement Fretilin then declared independence. On the day after President Ford and Henry Kissinger left Jakarta in December 1975, the Indonesian army poured into East Timor. Jakarta periodically declares that the guerrilla war against Fretilin, which has lasted ever since, is over and that the Timorese are content to be a province of the world's largest Muslim nation. The Roman Catholic East Timorese see matters differently.

The first of the recent massacres, on Tuesday last week, seems to have been started by the crack units of the Indonesian army assigned to the territory. At a funeral in the capital, Dili, the large crowd of mourners appears to have been swelled by children walking to school. In any event both mourners and children fled into the cemetery as the army opened fire. Their commander said there was between five and ten minutes of continuous fire. Though the army claimed only 19 deaths, other witnesses put the number at more than 150.

More disturbing, because indubitably premeditated, was the incident last Friday. Reports from several sources suggest that about 80 surviving witnesses of the funeral massacre were taken to a well-known execution ground outside the capital and shot. The Indonesians have promised an enquiry; but there is little chance that it will be impartial.

The Timorese believed that the liberation of Kuwait by force of Western arms augured well for their own cause. So far such hopes have not been fulfilled. The government of Portugal is again taking an interest in its former colony. In nearby Australia too, public opinion has forced Bob Hawke, the prime minister, to reconsider his recognition of the Indonesian annexation.

Yet the British government has no objection to arms sales to the Indonesians, among them Hawk military aircraft. The Foreign Office has not so far joined the Portuguese and Australians in drawing attention to East Timor. A question in the Commons this week elicited a bland response.

Britain as a permanent member of the UN Security Council could still press for a UN-sponsored referendum in East Timor. That would give immense encouragement to the Timorese. Such a plebiscite would be the only just method of ascertaining whether East Timor wishes to remain part of Indonesia, to revive links with Portugal or, most likely, to become independent. They have a right to such a choice.

OBSERVER SUNDAY 24 NOVEMBER 1991

OBSERVER

Chelsea Bridge House, Queenstown Road, London SW8 4NN 071-627 0700

Eastern atrocities

THE CASE for blind Western support for the undemocratic regime of General Suharto in Indonesia was never strong, even in the heyday of the Cold War. From the moment he seized power, his rule was certainly anti-Communist: it was also bloody, oppressive and corrupt.

Now the Cold War is over, there is no excuse at all for the West to continue winking at Indonesia's sham democracy and Suharto's atrocities. The various massacres this month of hundreds of peaceful protesters by the Indonesian army — itself already guilty of illegally occupying East Timor since 1975 — are an insult to the world community and demand a swift response. UN Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar has been sadly remiss in allowing Suharto, the Mobutu of South-East Asia, to get away for so long with his defiance of long-standing Security Council resolutions that call for the occupation forces to quit Timorese territory. An early test for Mr Boutros Ghali, as he takes over at the UN, will be how he tackles Indonesia's defiance of world opinion.

It is also time our own Foreign Office woke up to the revulsion that people in this country feel about the massacres in Dili and other Timorese towns. It has to stop its shilly-shallying about the Indonesian dictatorship — one minute joining its European Community partners in a strong protest and the next announcing that Suharto need not worry about anything Britain might do.

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East Timor and selective morality on a world stage

DURING the Gulf War the importance of upholding United Nations resolutions was heralded by politicians around the globe. However, it appears there are UN resolutions - and UN resolutions. Some carry more weight than others, depending largely on their geo-political and economic context.

Every year since 1975 the United Nations has condemned the Indonesian invasion and annexation of the Portuguese colony of East Timor. The Catholic peoples of East Timor have the right to self-determination, the UN says, and should not be forced at the end of a gun into joining Moslem Indonesia.

So much for the words. The past 15 years have seen the Indonesians committing genocide in East Timor while the world turns a blind eye. Saddam Hussein's crimes in Kuwait pale in comparison to the orgy of murder visited on East Timor. Yet, save for Pope John Paul II, not a single world leader has been to East Timor to show solidarity. Only the Catholic church and its brave bishops, priests and sisters in East Timor have spoken out about what is happening to their people.

The same members of the Security Council who denounced Iraq in such ringing terms have been supplying Indonesia with the arms to kill the Timorese.

Political expediency - upholding the pro-western Suharto regime in Indonesia as a bulwark to the expansion of communism - no longer provides even a fig leaf to cover the disgrace of the attitude of Britain, France and United States to a quarter of the Timorese people being massacred. So why will the new world order not do something about the continuing repression there - of which the massacre in the cemetery last week was just the latest expression? Because East Timor is not in the Gulf? Again no longer any real excuse because substantial oil deposits have been found off its coast. Because there is no chance of the East Timorese being viable as an independent nation? Well the oil reserves and the continuing resistance to the Indonesian invasion suggest both a future prosperity and a national sentiment.

The real reason is that the statesmen and women believe there are no brownie points to be won either on the world stage or with voters by standing up for an obscure remnant of a colonial past in the far east. Indonesia is big and potentially powerful and that seems to equate with legitimacy in today's international relations.

The pity of the matter is that the brave East Timorese still believe that we will come to their rescue. 16 years of tyranny have not yet taught them that the West is a fair weather friend.

To the Catholic church's credit it has proved more loyal, but lacks the international muscle to force the politicians to act, to match their fine words about the UN with action. Perhaps what is needed is for an acknowledged world figure who has no pretentions to court popularity to join with the Pope in demanding action. Now there's a job for our erstwhile leader.

Indonesia

A diplomatic massacre

IN THE 3½ years since Ali Alatas, a career diplomat, became foreign minister of Indonesia, he has done much to make the country's soldier-politicians seem respectable in the eyes of the West. The massacre at a funeral in East Timor on November 12th, following anti-Indonesian demonstrations there on October 28th, threatens to leave much of his work in ruins.

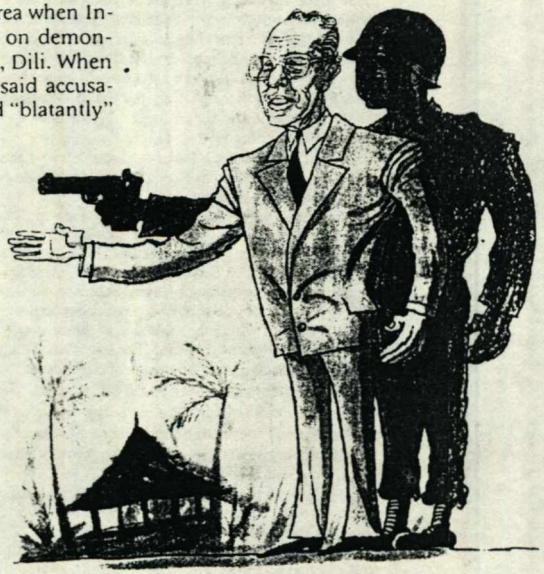
Holland, the former colonial power, said this week that it was suspending aid to Indonesia. Canada is thinking of doing the same. There have been rumblings about human rights from both the United States and the European Community. The Australian government does not again want to fall out with its neighbour—with which it has had difficulties in the past—but some members of the ruling Labor Party want the foreign minister, Gareth Evans, to take Indonesia to task over the killings. In Melbourne dockworkers have refused to handle Indonesian shipping.

Mr Alatas was in South Korea when Indonesian soldiers opened fire on demonstrators in East Timor's capital, Dili. When he arrived back in Jakarta he said accusations that the soldiers had acted "blatantly" (a euphemistic adverb) did not make sense.

Indeed, it would seem senseless for Indonesia to invite the wrath of the world over East Timor. The mainly-Christian Portuguese colony that Indonesia occupied in 1975 bitterly resisted the Muslim invaders. At first Indonesian policy in East Timor was simply oppression. Many thousands of Timorese died of famine. There were accusations of genocide. Latterly, though, Indonesia has put money into the place. The standard of living is now far higher than when the Portuguese ruled. During the past year or two a few journalists and other outsiders have been allowed in. Australia has recognised the annexation, and Mr Alatas was hopeful that the United Nations would at last accept it too. Then came the killings in a churchyard in Dili, where a crowd was mourning the death of an opponent of Indonesian rule.

The Indonesians say 19 people were killed. Amnesty International says the total may be more than 100. The Indonesians say that the soldiers opened fire because they were provoked and misunderstood an order. Witnesses say the firing was deliberate and sustained. An investigation by an Indonesian-appointed committee was due to begin work on November 28th. President Suharto said its report had to be "full and fair". It has to be if it is to satisfy both the outside world and the American-educated technocrats who have an increasing say in Indonesian affairs. They see themselves as more representative of their country than trigger-happy soldiers.

Indonesia relies on the rich countries for aid worth more than $5 billion a year. Mr Alatas says donors should have waited for the report of the investigating committee before "taking up positions". He shakes his head sadly: "This is most unfortunate."



The Economist
VOLUME 321
NUMBER
7735
30.11.91

Mark Curtis decries Western connivance in Indonesian atrocities and **James Gibbons** pays tribute to a victim

The executioners' charter

THE GUARDIAN
Monday November 25 1991

THE killing of some 100 demonstrators by Indonesian security forces in East Timor this month highlights only the horrific nature of one of the world's most repressive regimes, but also Western double standards: there is a long history of connivance, especially on the part of the United States and Britain, with human rights abuses in Indonesia.

For several decades various groups have been reporting the extent of Indonesia's violation of human rights. Up to 200,000 people have been killed in East Timor since Jakarta's invasion in 1975. Torture, illegal executions, detention without trial, and forced migration have been commonplace, not only in Indonesia proper but also in its "27th province". Throughout this time, however, Indonesia has escaped ostracism by the West.

A special relationship between Washington and Jakarta was forged in 1965, at the beginning of the Suharto regime, when Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) members and many others were liquidated by the country's new rulers. About 500,000 died in an orgy of terror which, internal US documents reveal, was supported by the US. Thus the US embassy not only knew about the army's actions, but the US ambassador even cabled that the US had "made it clear that Embassy and USG generally sympathetic with and admiring of what army doing".

Professor Gabriel Kolko, a leading cold war historian, has written that "no single American action in the period after 1945 was as bloodthirsty . . . for [the US] tried to initiate the massacre, and it did everything in its power to encourage Suharto, including equipping his killers, to see that the physical liquidation of the PKI was carried through . . ."

The invasion of East Timor took place after President Ford and Henry Kissinger had completed a visit to Jakarta. It is now thought that the invasion was delayed to avoid embarrassing the visitors, but it is almost inconceivable that the US did not give approval for it. A few months previously, the US ambassador had noted that if Indonesia were to intervene, it should do so "effectively". And a month after the invasion, a State Department official observed that the US was "more or less condoning the incursion into East Timor".

The "27th province" has therefore joined the ranks of the Western Sahara and Lebanon — in marked contrast to Afghanistan and Kuwait — as a victim of two of the world's invasions condoned by its leading power.

Britain, meanwhile, has become one of Indonesia's main arms suppliers (mainly surveillance radar and surface-to-air missiles). In 1983-85, just before the order for the missiles, about 3,500 to 4,500 "criminals" were murdered by death squads widely assumed to have links with the Indonesian security forces. When the radars were ordered in 1989, Amnesty International noted that "reports of unfair trials, torture in police and military custody, police killings and 'disappearances' [in East Timor] continued to emerge".

A European Parliament report in 1987 had called on EC member states to encourage greater respect for human rights, and to "take political action to encourage" Indonesia's withdrawal from East Timor. Little evidence of this was forthcoming from Britain or the US; Indonesia remained a key ally.

It has been the acquiescence of the international community's main players which has permitted Indonesia to pursue its violent course. On November 17 the leader of the East Timor resistance movement, Fretilin, issued several appeals.

The first was to the US, "since its official stand is that there has been no true assertion of self-determination in East Timor". The second was to Australia, imploring it to renounce its Timor Gap treaty with Indonesia, whereby it exploits oil deposits in the sea off East Timor. The third urged the UN secretary-general to help to end the "climate of terror".

This is another test of the new world order. In the Zairean and Haitian crises, the main powers in the international coalition against Iraq have done comparatively little. There are similarities between Mobutu in Zaire and Suharto in Indonesia. Both were seen as being on the right side in the cold war, presiding over regimes deemed, largely for economic reasons, to be of strategic importance. Zaire is an supplier of cobalt and copper, Indonesia of an array of resources crucial for Western economies.

Washington will be as reluctant to upset Suharto as it has been to upset Mobuto. For Washington, as for London, important interests are at stake; they transcend the cold war, though they are less dependable as a means of mobilising public support. One can expect, therefore, that any international outcry over East Timor will be quickly muted.

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An unmarked grave for Kamal, defender of the East Timorese cause

MY stepbrother, Kamal, was one of those murdered last Tuesday by the Indonesian army. First they shot him. When a Red Cross worker found him prostrate in his own blood, he was still breathing, but the soldiers wouldn't let the ambulance take him away. When at last they did, it was too late.

Like the others who perished among the gravestones of Santa Cruz, Kamal was killed twice. Once by a bullet, and once when the Church and the Red Cross were refused access to the wounded.

Kamal bled to death, but others were denied even that tortured peace. After the firing, soldiers waded through the wounded, clubbing survivors and shooting bodies that still moved. Then they ravaged the dead for items of value. When Kamal was found, he had been robbed of everything save for the New Zealand passport he clutched in the half-conscious belief that it might be his one chance of survival.

For 36 hours our family was told nothing by the Indonesians. "There are no foreigners involved," said one military official. When a New Zeland diplomat finally discovered the truth, Kamal had already been buried, in an unmarked grave.

As a student of Indonesian at New South Wales University, he had been an active defender of the Timorese cause; he was visiting the country to report on events surrounding the anticipated visit of a Portuguese parliamentary delegation. When the visit was called off, he wrote in his diary that "the disappointment here today is not only the deflating of many high expectations but, more worrying still, the indefinite delay that gives the Indonesian military the perfect opportunity to eliminate all those Timorese who had exposed their identity while preparing for the visit". Little did he know he would be among the fated number.

It is cruel that those who are most courageous in defence of liberty are the first to be sacrificed in that struggle. But if liberty for a suffering people is what Kamal's death has brought closer, it is one comfort for those who were privileged to know him in life.

TAPOL OCCASIONAL REPORTS

No.1 Exchange of messages with Fretilin commander Shanana Gusmao with Lord Avebury, chair Parliamentary Human Rights Group and Carmel Budiardjo, Tapol Organising Secretary.

No.2 Joint Statement by Union of Democratic Timorese and Fretilin, March 1986.

No.3 Reactions from Indonesia to Transmigration Campaign. Indonesian press clippings reacting to the campaign by Survival International and TAPOL.

No.4 Statement on East Timor to the UN Committee of 24, August 1986.

No.5 The 1987 Indonesian Election in East Timor. An analysis written by TAPOL.

No.6 TAPOL Statement on East Timor to the UN Committee of 24, August 1987.

No.7 July 1987 Statement on the Joint Decision of the Chairman of the Supreme Court and Minister of Justice, by IKADIN, the Indonesian Lawyers' Association.

No.8 World Bank maintains support for Transmigration. Survival International and TAPOL write to World Bank, 22 January 1988.

No.9 TAPOL Statement on East Timor to the UN Committee of 24, August 1988.

No.10 Open Letter to the World Bank on the Kedung Ombo Dam.

No.11 TAPOL Statement on East Timor to the UN Decolonisation Committee, August 1989.

No.12 IGGI and Human Rights. Press coverage on IGGI Chairman Pronk visit to Indonesia. INFIGHT notes presented to Minister Pronk.

No.13 TAPOL statement to the UN Decolonisation Committee, August 1990

No.14 UN resolutions on East Timor, 1975–1982

No.15 TAPOL statement to the UN Decolonisation Committee, August 1991

No.16 Freeport and the Tribal People

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The Indonesia Human Rights Campaign